

Student Connection

Casey Dillon, UNC-Chapel Hill

Erin Deignan Reis, UNC-Chapel Hill

Dolly Soto, UNC-Chapel Hill

Department of City and Regional Planning (DCRP) Roundup

Casey Dillon

If there was one overarching theme from the 2009-2010 academic year, it was community-based learning. Through volunteerism, participation in local planning events, and interactions with regional leaders in the field, Master's students gained knowledge and strengthened professional skills that will serve them well in building sustainable communities.

Faculty Search

Thomas William Lester will join the DCRP faculty in July 2010 as a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Economic Development. Currently, Lester serves as the Assistant Chair of the Donald Vial Center for Employment in the Green Economy at the University of California, Berkeley. His research interests include the "green economy" and the role of labor market institutions in fostering equity in urban communities. He is currently working on a study, funded by the California Public Utilities Commission, which explores the economic restructuring caused by emerging clean-technology sector jobs. Lester was invited to join DCRP through a Fall 2009 search process that included student, staff, and faculty participation.

Speaking Events

DCRP was proud to host Tom Murphy as our 2010 Distinguished Siler Lecturer. Murphy is the Senior Resident Fellow and Klingbeil Family Chair for Urban Development at the Urban Land Institute. He also served

as the Mayor of Pittsburg from 1994 to 2005, during which time he initiated a public-private partnership strategy that leveraged more than \$4.5 billion for economic development. In his lecture, Murphy highlighted the need for and challenges associated with implementing bold plans for large-scale urban revitalization.

The Planners' Forum Spring Speakers Series brought another three events to DCRP. These interactive talks focused on a variety of topics relevant to the planning world. First, David Del Vecchio, President of Solar Seed, Inc., and Lyle Estill, President of Piedmont Biofuels, spoke about alternative energy in the Triangle Region. Next, Chris Estes, Executive Director of the North Carolina Housing Coalition, and Bryant Applegate, President of ABA Government Consulting, discussed the challenge of choosing locations for affordable housing development in the twenty-first century. Finally, Jeffrey H. Jackson, Associate Professor of History at Rhodes College, shared

Casey Dillon is a master's degree candidate in City and Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill. Originally from the greater Seattle area, she is specializing in land use and environmental planning and will graduate in 2011.

Erin Deignan Reis, class of 2011, is a dual-degree student in City and Regional Planning and Law at UNC-Chapel Hill. She specializes in land-use planning and this summer is an intern at the Southern Environmental Law Center in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Dolly Soto is a master's degree candidate in City and Regional Planning at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her specialization is land use and environmental planning. After growing up in New York City, she is thrilled to finally have a backyard garden.



Community Home Trust Work Day. DCRP graduate students join together with staff from the Community Home Trust and neighborhood residents to landscape an affordable housing development in Chapel Hill, N.C.

excerpts from his recent book on how Parisians endured the 1910 flooding of the Seine.

Diverse Communities Bus Tour

The third annual Diverse Communities Bus Tour moved from Durham to Raleigh this year, giving 21 participants the opportunity to learn more about community development challenges in urban settings. The trip included a walking tour of civil rights history, led by staff from the Raleigh City Museum; a discussion of Hope VI projects and a tour of a public housing facility led by the Raleigh Housing Authority; and visits to infill affordable housing sites with the City of Raleigh Community Development Department, Habitat for Humanity, and DHIC, Inc.

Community Events

DCRP students have been actively engaged with the community this year. During the fall semester, students volunteered at a Habitat for Humanity work day in Pittsboro, and they also served as hosts for the East Durham Home Tour. During the holiday season, the department held a food drive and donated more than \$500 in items to a local food bank. Seizing an opportunity to learn outside the classroom, students enjoyed a special behind-the-scenes tour of modernist works at the Ackland

Art Museum this spring. And, in the warmer weather, students rolled up their sleeves and volunteered with the Community Home Trust to help landscape an affordable housing development in Chapel Hill.

Admitting the Class of 2012

DCRP is attracting unprecedented numbers of prospective students. This year, the department received 338 MCRP applications and 67 Ph.D. applications, representing increases of 44% and 16%, respectively, from last year. The DCRP community is looking forward to welcoming our 2012 class in the fall and hopes that these new colleagues will continue the commitment to learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Founder of LEED Says Green Building Only Part of Climate Change Solution

Erin Deignan Reis

Rob Watson, the founding father of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System, mentioned surprisingly little about green building during his March 19 talk at UNC-Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School. "If you show LEED to good designers, they say, 'That's good design,'" Watson

said during the panel discussion with Dennis Quaintance, owner of the country's first LEED Platinum hotel, the Proximity Hotel in Greensboro. "But we need to stop using the term 'green building.' There are good buildings and bad buildings." And buildings – presumably the "bad" ones – are the source of 41% of the United States' carbon emissions, Watson said. By comparison, he said, transportation accounts for only 30% of those emissions, and industry for 22%.

But improving the efficiency of buildings is only a small part of what we need to do to make human life sustainable, according to Watson and Quaintance. In the event, titled "Wanted: A Radical Confidence . . . Why the Future is in Our Hands Today," Watson compared our climate change situation to the sinking of the Titanic: "The SS Business As Usual has hit the iceberg. We have started processes in motion that we cannot stop." He likened those who do not believe there is a climate crisis to the Titanic passengers who naively allowed half-full lifeboats to leave the sinking ship.

The discussion's moderator, Gordon Merklein, Executive Director of Real Estate Development at UNC-Chapel Hill, asked the panelists what people can do to help solve the environmental problems we have created. Watson said we need to completely change the way we think: "Our survival depends on natural law, not human law. Chemistry, biology, and physics would beat politics, economics, and habit in a smackdown any day." He pointed out that the sun produces 2,000 times more energy than we need, yet we still consider coal the most "inexpensive" fuel. He labeled cap-and-trade and other efforts to price externalities as mere attempts to avoid facing reality. Watson also expressed frustration that he does not know what the mechanics of the necessary change would look like, saying, "I hope that by talking to each other, we can figure that out."

Despite building the nation's first LEED Platinum hotel, Quaintance was humble about his accomplishments, saying that he tells people not to be impressed by the Proximity Hotel. "We're still going in the wrong direction, just more slowly," he said. Quaintance added that LEED Platinum certification was easy – and cost-effective – to accomplish; he and his wife simply considered the effects of each of their decisions on the physical and social world. His advice for other businesses? "Invite someone from 10 generations in the future into the boardroom for every decision."

Will Allen's "Good Food Revolution"

Dolly Soto

Will Allen, a former collegiate basketball player at the University of Miami and an urban agriculture pioneer, visited Raleigh in mid-April to kick off two community gardens – one at the Longview School and another at Alliance Medical Ministry. With easy-going enthusiasm,

Allen spoke to a crowd of more than 40 guests in the small chapel of Alliance Medical Ministry (the Alliance). Allen's Milwaukee, Wisc.-based organization, Growing Power, Inc., has been at the forefront of the local food movement for many years, yet he prefers to call it a "good food revolution," noting the involvement of young people and people of color.

Allen founded Growing Power as an entrepreneurial, not-for-profit operation in 1993 when he purchased the last remaining urban farm in Milwaukee. This 2.5-acre farm eventually became the starting point of a million-dollar farm operation that produces 20,000 plants and vegetables annually. In addition to farming, Growing Power's activities include providing youth training and employment opportunities, teaching immigrants sustainable farming techniques, initiating a weekly produce delivery service, and working to shape Chicago's food policy. In his talk, Allen presented 350 slides on topics ranging from the organization to composting techniques and urban fish farming. When he purchased the property, it was being used for flower cultivation, but the farm now grows food as diverse as watermelon and tilapia.

Even before converting the farm from flowers to food, Allen's focus was on social change. He transplanted his original flower crops to abandoned lots, creating "flower explosions" to combat drug dealing and crime. To this day, Growing Power focuses on the power of "permaculture" – permanent, sustainable agriculture that mimics natural ecology – to empower communities. Growing Power has worked with at-risk youth, people with mobility impairments, and other disadvantaged groups to create beautiful spaces in these communities.

Growing Power currently operates 11 farms, four of which are located in Chicago. The organization is constantly finding innovative ways to further its sustainable operations, which include growing fish in barrels, heating greenhouses during the cold winters, and composting local breweries' waste. Allen argued that compost is the most influential element of Growing Power's operation: the organization collects more than 100,000 pounds of waste each week, which it composts and uses to help insulate hoop houses against the freezing Minnesota temperatures, as well as to assist in garden planting on top of parking lots and other paved surfaces.

Allen's talk at the Alliance was his second visit to the Triangle in the past six months: in late 2009, he spoke to a standing-room-only crowd at N.C. State University at an event sponsored by the University and the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. Near the end of this three-hour talk, Allen unveiled Growing Power's plans to establish a Regional Outreach Training Center in the Triangle to provide guidance and training in sustainable farming techniques.

Editors' Note: In April 2010, Allen was named as one of Time magazine's 100 Most Influential People.